

St. Giles Church,

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to Badger

BADGER

Please Pray ...

for the people who worship in this church;
for all who live in Badger;
for the clergy and all who minister here;
for all who visit this place.

Six Parishes' Web Site:

<http://www.churches.lichfield.anglican.org/shifnal/beckbury/>



A Brief Guide

HISTORY The name *Badger* may mean *Beocca's ridge* linked with Beocca of Beckbury. Badger is a small but very old parish now in the diocese of Lichfield. Until 1905, together with its neighbour, Beckbury, it formed a kind of appendix to the diocese of Hereford. This anomalous position can probably be traced back to its ancient connection with the Abbey of Wenlock.

The Abbey of Wenlock was founded in about 680 AD, and handed over to St. Milburga, the daughter of Merewald, King of Hecani, part of the powerful Kingdom of Mercia. The two manors of Badger and Beckbury were among the lands given to the Abbey at its foundation. Earl Roger of Shrewsbury also held land in 'Beghesovre'

This connection is reflected in the fact that the first rectors of Badger were nominated by the lay lord of the manor and presented by him to the Prior of Wenlock who in turn presented them to the Bishop of Hereford for institution. When the Abbey was dissolved in the reign of Henry VIII, the right to nominate and present passed to the Crown. Today Badger parish is linked with five other parishes, and the rector is jointly appointed by the patrons of all the parishes. The patron of Badger is the Crown, through the Lord Chancellor.

It may be that some place of worship existed in early times, but nothing is known about it. There was a church on the present site in the 12th century and the lower part of the tower of the present church is certainly old. The first rector whose name we know was Roger, clerk of Baggesor, about 1174.

A new nave was built onto the old tower in 1834. Provision was made for the digging of new foundations, and for "the red stone on the estate to be used in the building", but "the old materials to be used in the new building as far as they are good and sound." Mr. Francis Halley of Shifnal was in charge of the work. The foundation stone was laid by Mrs. Hawkins Browne on 10th October 1833, and the church was consecrated by the Bishop of Hereford on 4th September 1834.

There is an interesting letter of 1839 to Benjamin Boddington, Esq., (father of Thomas Boddington, Rector 1838 - 1871), written by Francis Halley, giving details of the new oak used. Halley says that near Tong Castle, there was at the time an "artificial" mound of earth thrown up, it is said, by Oliver Cromwell, "to batter the Castle and Church". On top of this mound was a group of oak trees - one in the centre and twelve in a circle round it, known as Christ and the twelve Apostles. When the centre one was felled, Halley says that he bought it, after the branches had been lopped "for 40 pounds, cash down". The bole which he acquired was 24 feet 6 inches long and there was not a bough springing from the whole length of the bole. This was the wood used for the "pewing (seats) of Badger Church".

A note on the back of one of the bills states that there was seating for 226; 124 in the body of the church, 42 in the gallery and 60 for children. It seems that the church had a distinct chancel which was divided from the nave by a screen. This 15th century screen was moved in 1886 to its present position separating the main body of the church from the Chapel. Some difficulty must have been experienced in deciding how best to use this lovely survival of the mediaeval church because the accounts have an item, "fixing Screen in Chapel - three days - 14s 3d"; and a little later, "altering screen in Chancel - 3½ days - 14s 7d."

The Chapel was built in 1886 by the Capel Cure family who at this time owned the estate and the initials A.C.C. are to be found beside the door leading out from the Chapel. In this Chapel there are some interesting and distinguished memorials to various families who owned the estate and who were related to each other. The oldest is to Isaac Hawkins Browne, who in 1779 enlarged Badger Hall, built in 1719 for John Kinnersley who replaced the old timber framed manor house. I H Browne laid out the grounds improving Badger Dingle which became an attractive feature, and popular with visitors when it was opened to the public in 1851. It remained so through to the 1930's but was overgrown by the 70's. It can still be visited with care by the footpath opposite the village cemetery.

Isaac Browne died in 1818. without heirs and left Badger to the Cheney family, from whom the estate then passed to Col. Alfred Capel Cure, a nephew, who died in 1896. His nephew Francis was the last owner of Badger Hall, which was demolished in 1953. The present private residence named Badger Hall used to be the old hall's utilities building .

The interior of the church would have looked very different from the present day appearance. There was a gallery at the back. The pews were of the “horse-box” type, so typical of the age made of oak with doors nearly four feet high. The Squire’s pew had four oak chairs, cushions and carpet. When the alterations were made in 1886, the gallery was pulled down and the old “horse-box” pews were replaced by the long oak ones now in use.

Music was provided in the newly built church by a “psalm barrel organ, with five stops of pipes and three barrels in a handsome Gothic oak case”.

The Font, given by friends at the time of the alterations, was designed by a Mr. Francis after the font in St. Bride’s Fleet Street.

In the church-yard stand the remains of a mediaeval village cross. It was moved to its present position from its original site some hundred yards away. Only the steps and part of the top remain. Originally the top was not the conventional cross shape, but rectangular with a carving on each panel.

Parish Amalgamations

Until 1952, Badger had its very own rector. The Rev. Archibald Dix was Rector of Badger and nowhere else, until he retired in 1952. The following year, Badger was united with Beckbury and Ryton in a three-parish benefice, with one rector for all three parishes. This was one of the first three-parish united benefices in the country.

In 1989, a further amalgamation took place, and Badger is now part of a Six Parish united benefice, with one rector between all Six Parishes.

Badger House

When Revd. Archibald Dix died in 1953, his daughter Margaret continued to live in the Rectory until her death in 1992. She left the Rectory, built in 1838, to the Church in her will, and the building was eventually given to the Cornelius Trust for a Christian holiday and retreat Centre. It closed in 2005 and is now a private residence.

Memorials

The memorials on the north of the Chapel are distinguished works by well-known sculptors. The most easterly, in memory of Jane Browne, widow of Isaac Hawkins Browne, is a relief by John Flaxman, R.A., who in 1810 became Professor of Sculpture at the Royal Academy.

The centre one, in memory of Isaac Hawkins Browne, who died in 1818, is by Sir Francis Chantrey, R.A., His “Sleeping Children” monument is in Lichfield Cathedral.

The one on the left, in memory of Harriet Margaret Pigot, daughter of Lt. General Cheney, who died in 1852, is by John Gibson, There is another work by him on the north wall of the nave, in memory of Gen. Cheney’s wife, who died in 1848.

On the north wall of the nave, there is the oldest tablet in the Church. It is a slab in memory of Elizabeth Kynnersley, only daughter of Thomas Kynnersley, Esq., Lord of the Towne of Badger. She died in 1649 aged 21. The Kynnersley family owned Badger Hall for several generations before selling it to Isaac Hawkins Browne, industrialist and politician

On this wall, also, there is a memorial to Emma Grainger, who for 42 years was school mistress in Badger till 1933 when both she and the school patron Francis Capel Cure died. In 1819 there were two schools in Badger one with 10 children, the other supported by the Brownes had 20 pupils rising to 50 in 1851. There were 20 on roll when it closed in 1933.

The early monuments must have been moved once or twice before being relocated in their present positions. The receipt for £18.10s signed by Allan Cunningham, is preserved together with a covering letter in which he says that “Mr. Chantrey who is busy putting the drapery on a statue of the Duke of Sutherland, desires me to say that he is glad to hear that the monuments, particularly the one from his own hand of Mr. Browne, have been refixed in the new church of Badger without injury.”

The two pictures in the church were given by the Capel Cure family. The one on the south wall is a copy of “Ecce Homo” described as being ‘after Titian’. The other, at the west end, is a copy of “The Annunciation” by Guido.

The Dix Memorial Window

This window is a memorial to Dr. Margaret Ruth Dix, who worked for many years as a consultant at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, and was a world-renowned specialist on neuro-otology. She was a benefactor of Badger, having lived all her life here, and was a regular member of the congregation of this church until her death. The window is also a tribute to her father, the Reverend Archibald Dix, who was Rector of Badger for over 40 years.

In the trefoil at the top of the design is a reference to the faith of the Rector in the form of a priestly cross, encircled by Celtic knotwork based on the number seven, creating a continuum, with no beginning and no end.

Dr. Dix loved nature in all its forms, so in the main light the four elements are shown: the Sun as Fire; the cloud strata as Air; green fields, trees and ploughed fields as Earth; and beneath that a surging wave for Water, with droplets of spray above and below it. In the dark sky near the Fire (the Sun) are seven guiding stars.

Between the clouds and the land is EPHPHATHA, the Aramaic word used by Jesus when healing a deaf and dumb man meaning “be opened” It reflects both Dr. Margaret Dix’s skill at restoring physical health (“opening” physical ears), and the Reverend Dix’s talent for preaching the Gospel (“opening” ears to the Gospel message)

Set against the landscape is the logo of the National Hospital, and below are words Dr. Dix wrote in one of her commonplace books.

A small roundel with a representation of the inner ear refers to Dr. Dix’s life of healing; and her favourite cat sits on the panel which includes an inscription. The borders are made up of small pieces of brightly coloured glass. The window was designed and made by Jane Gray A.R.C.A. of Shrawardine (Shrewsbury), commissioned by the Trustees of the Dix foundation, and dedicated by the Bishop of Shrewsbury in 1995

Church Refurbishment

In the 1980s, the church building was in a poor state of repair. Indeed it was so bad that there was talk of closing it down. However, the villagers worked together to raise funds and get work done to ensure the continued presence of a church building in this village. Major work was done on the roof; the electrical system was renewed, a new central heating boiler installed and the whole building redecorated.

Kneelers

Another project that people collaborated on was the production of new kneelers for the church. The old ones were getting very dusty and worn. So villagers and friends associated with the church got together and made new ones. The kneelers were each individually designed and worked, and the designs represent a variety of interests and themes. There are (inevitably!) badgers, as well as tractors and flowers, geometrical designs and touching personal notes.

The church continues to be a place of regular worship on Sundays with communion at the altar bible, readings at the lectern and hymns of praise accompanied by the organ.

As well as church festivals in the year, there are also the more personal family occasions of baptisms, weddings and funerals .

Church buildings have traditionally been special places for local people and visitors

and even if less so now in the 21st century the symbols and atmosphere of a church can remind people of God and his good purposes for us and his creation through Jesus Christ.